

Chapter 15

The Validity of Resurrection

The Resurrection was a Verifiable Historical Fact

Verse 1—Paul began a new topic, *now I make known to you, brethren*, to reaffirm their commonly held belief in the concept of resurrection.

- It was encapsulated, Paul said, *in the gospel which I preached to you*, a message of good news, *which you also received* (παρελάβετε join oneself to, to associate with).
- Having received it, the gospel *in which also you* (continue to) *stand* is the foundation for their eternal life.

Verse 2—This gospel, *by which also you are* [being] *saved*, is dependent upon *if you hold fast* (κατέχετε to keep firm possession of, to possess) *the word which I preached to you*.

- Whatever this salvation is for the Corinthian believers, it cannot be the new birth, since the new birth is not conditioned upon the need to *hold fast* to the gospel, but only simple belief in Christ's promise of eternal life.
- Paul had preached the gospel to them when he originally came to Corinth, and he wished for them to continue to *hold fast* in the message he preached and they had received.
- Paul wanted *born-again people* to hold fast to and not be moved away from the gospel.
- The reason Paul warns the Corinthians *unless you believed in vain* (εἰκῆ without just cause) is because if there was no resurrection from the dead—a point he will make in verse 19—their faith was worthless and so would be no need to hold onto it.
- But, indeed, it was not worthless as the rest of the chapter will argue.
- So the Corinthians should continue to hold fast to the gospel they had believed because this was the means of their being saved, that is, their sanctification.
- Holding fast to the gospel, its content, message, and calling, a believer is spiritually healthy in preparation for the Judgment Seat of Christ.

There are Four Realities Associated with the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Verse 3—Reality #1—Christ died for our sins.

- Paul had heard of the Lord Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and post-resurrection appearances and had then passed this information along to others, *for I delivered to you as of first importance* [among the first things] *what I also received*.
- He apparently received the essence of the gospel on the Damascus road and learned more details from other sources (Galatians 1:11).
- Namely, *that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures* verified in passages like Psalm 16:10 and Isaiah 53:8-10.
- These facts were also reiterated in the early preaching of the church in Acts 3:13-18 and 8:32-35.
- Paul had stated that Christ died for our sins as a Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7), paying for our sin, not as an atonement, merely providing a covering of sin.

Verse 4—Reality #2: Christ was buried and that He was buried.

- Christ's death was not an accident.
- He did not endure His agony away from the notice of the crowd.
- Rather, the crucifixion scene was a deliberate public execution.
- Christ actually died and was buried in a tomb.
- Executioners didn't take any chances but plunged a spear into His side. Then He was carried away, wrapped according to the embalming custom of the day, and placed in a tomb, sealed by a heavy rock.
- Jesus' burial emphasized the finality of His death and attested to the validity of His resurrection.

Reality #3: Christ was raised, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

- The perfect tense and passive voice of the Greek verb translated “was raised” implies that since God raised Him He is still alive.
- The third day was Sunday. Friday, the day of the crucifixion, was the first day, and Saturday was the second.
- *According to the Scriptures* would include the previous passages about Christ’s death. The entire gospel message is grounded in the testimony of the Old Testament prophets and verified by the New Testament apostles.

Verse 5—Reality #4: Christ was seen and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve as further verification of Jesus’ resurrection.

- Peter is prominent as a leader among the group of Jesus’ twelve disciples, who all had seen Jesus after His resurrection.
- The fact that Peter and the twelve saw Jesus was objective evidence of His resurrection.

Verse 6—Jesus resurrection was verified by a much larger contingency of believers who witnessed Jesus resurrection *then he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at one time.*

- This is the only record of this particular appearance in the New Testament.
- That Jesus appeared to so many people at one time is evidence that His resurrection body was not a spirit. Many people could testify that they had seen Him on this single occasion.
- Since the resurrection took place about 23 years before Paul wrote this epistle, it is reasonable that the majority of this group of witnesses *most of whom are still alive* at that time.
- Any skeptical Corinthians could check with them, *though some have fallen asleep* (a euphemism for death—believers will one day “wake up” out of death emphasizing the hope of resurrection).

Verse 7—The resurrection itself brought some to faith, not merely confirmed the faith of believers.

- *Then he appeared to James*, most likely the half-brother of Jesus. James did not believe Jesus was the Messiah initially (John 7:5), but he believed when Jesus rose from the dead.
- James wrote the book of James and referred to Jesus as the *Lord Jesus Christ* and the *Lord of Glory* (James 1:1 and 2:1).
- The Jerusalem church regarded James, Peter, and John as the three “pillars” of the church (Acts 15:13-21).
- *Then [Jesus appeared] to all the apostles* in Acts 1 before He ascended into heaven.

Verse 8—Paul regarded the Lord’s appearance to him on the Damascus road as an equivalent post-resurrection appearance and the Lord’s last one *and last of all as to one untimely born* (ἔκτρομα refers to a premature birth, a miscarriage, or an aborted child), *He appeared to me also.*

- Paul used *untimely birth* as a powerful figure of the unexpected, abnormal nature of his apostolic call. His was an untimely, sudden spiritual birth, too late to be identified with the twelve.
- He had missed Jesus’ earthly ministry, unlike the disciples. They were each distinguished by having personally seen the resurrected Christ while He was still here, which made Paul the last of their company.

Verse 9—Due to the unexpected nature of his apostolic call, Paul commented, *for I am the least of the apostles*, viewing himself as *not fit* (ἰκανός competent or sufficient) *to be called an apostle.*

- The reason he felt less deserving of the office was because while the other apostles were building up the church, *I persecuted the church of God*, which he now served.
- Paul did not regard his apostleship as inferior to that of the other apostles, however (2 Corinthians 10:1—13:10; Galatians 1:11—2:21).

Verse 10—Yet Paul realized his past was a backdrop upon which to display the grace of God.

- *But by the grace of God I am what I am and his to me has not been in vain.*

- Paul’s disadvantages had become an asset to God to use Paul as an example of His selective favor. The persecutor had become a proclaimer.
- The history of the early church showed Paul without peer as he *in fact, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God with me.*
- He traveled more, suffered more opposition, wrote more, founded more groups of believers, disciplined more, and evangelized more than the other apostles.
- Yet he attached it all to the grace of God given to him. God’s grace did not turn out to be *vain or empty* on his behalf.

Verse 11—In the final analysis, what mattered was not the messenger, but the message.

- *Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.*
- In that regard, the apostolic message from both Paul and the original disciples was that the crucified Christ became the resurrected Christ which Paul had preached and they had believed.

Application

It should come as no surprise that this doctrine has been attacked more than most in the Christian faith. Just the idea that Jesus came back from the dead is a stumbling block to many. Some argue that the early Church simply made up the doctrine to give people hope and comfort. Others suggest Jesus may never have died, but was in a coma and the cold tomb may have revived him. But the Scripture is clear. Jesus was actually dead, buried (under guard), and bodily rose from the dead. The apostles rightly based the Christian faith on Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection. No other religion would dare make such a claim.

It’s Rational and Reasonable to Believe that Jesus was Bodily Resurrected

Verse 12—Apparently, some were skeptical even in Corinth and argued that no one dead could experience bodily resurrection. *Now if Christ is being preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?* It’s possible that one or more of these ideas had infiltrated the Corinthians thinking. This problem is introduced in verse 12 and then addressed at length in the remainder of the chapter. In the first eleven verses, Paul never discussed the problem. Now having established the historicity of the resurrection, he develops common ground about the truthfulness of our own bodily resurrection.

Denial and confusion about the resurrection of the dead took different forms in the New Testament.

- **The Greek pagans** denied the resurrection of the dead. In his sermon to those in the market place of Athens, Paul preached *Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man Whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.* Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, **some began to sneer**, but others said, **“We shall hear you again concerning this”** (Acts 17:30-32).
- **The Jewish Sadducees** did not embrace the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead either, *but perceiving that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!* And as he said this, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. **For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. And there arose a great uproar; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and began to argue heatedly, saying, “We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?”** (Acts 23:6-9).
- **Others insisted that the resurrection had already taken place.** Some who were confused, professed belief in a resurrection of the dead, but in some way they taught it had already happened. *But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place* [possibly in some spiritual sense], *and thus they upset the faith of some* (2 Timothy 2:16-18).

Verse 13—If there is no resurrection the Christian message is suspect. In principle, then, *but if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.*

- Denying a physical resurrection from the dead was to deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If so, then the Corinthians belief was misplaced since resurrection is central to the gospel message they had believed!

This denial leads to five consequences:

Verse 14—**First**, denying a bodily resurrection tore the heart out of the gospel leaving it lifeless *and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain* (κενὸν empty or futile), *your faith also is vain.*

- If that were so, their faith was meaningless since its object would be in a dead man.
- Yet, the gospel message was not of a dead martyr but of a living Savior who was raised from the dead.
- Take out the resurrection and there is no message. That is the inevitable conclusion of the matter.

Verse 15—**Second**, denying a bodily resurrection would make Paul and the apostles lowlifes and con artists.

- *Also, we are found to be false witnesses about God.*
- The reason is *because we have testified against God that he raised Christ from the dead, when in reality he did not raise him, if indeed the dead are not raised.*
- Paul and the apostles would either be false witnesses about God or a false witness claiming to be from God.
- The resurrection of Christ is the foundation of their message. Without it that message cannot be trusted.
- Jesus staked His whole ministry and message on resurrection from the dead. Jesus would be a false witness.
- The apostles staked their lives and ministry on resurrection (Acts 1:22; 2:32; 4:33). They, too would be false witnesses.

Verse 16—Since Paul and the apostles' message had uniformly affirmed the reality of Jesus resurrection *if the dead are not raised, and if Christ was still dead and in the grave, not even Christ has been raised*, then confidence in Christ for salvation is futile. There is no gospel. Jesus is dead not alive.

Verse 17—**Third**, denying a bodily resurrection makes salvation only a state of mind that does not correspond to the reality of sin needing to be paid for *and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is useless: you are still in your sins.*

- This means the believer is still dead in his or her sins. A person is without any hope of forgiveness or eternal life with no payment made for sin.

Verse 18—**Fourth**, denying a bodily resurrection meant *furthermore, those who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished.*

- Loved ones among the believers in Corinth who had died had no eternal hope, but instead have perished. Christians who had already died would be lost forever, eternally separated from God.
- Without the resurrection, the sting of death remains with eternal damnation.
- The ramifications of no resurrection were eternal. *Fallen asleep* is a euphemism for death. Today we say, passed away or is home with the Lord.

Verse 19—**Fifth**, denying a bodily resurrection meant the pagans and their merrymaking would be correct *if only in this life we have hope in Christ, we should be pitied more than anyone.*

- The foolishness of the cross would indeed be foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:18).
- Paul and the apostles who had suffered immensely on behalf of the gospel should be pitied, not followed.
- Sacrifices made for Christ would only be cruel, self inflicted jokes, laughed at by those advocating pleasure seeking and worldliness.

Application

Believers have no eternal future with resurrected bodies like Christ's if there is no resurrection. Believers have no past if there is not forgiveness of sins. Believers have no present life if there is no advantage over the lives of unbelievers. The entire Christian enterprise is a useless and worthless endeavor if resurrection is not possible.

The Resurrection of Christ Makes a Believer's Resurrection Inevitable

Verse 20—The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is a fact. *But now Christ has been raised from the dead.* Speculation now gave way to affirmation.

- The resurrected Christ *was the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.* This *firstfruits* was representative of the harvest to follow and the **first installment** and a guarantee of the harvest to come for those who had already died (fallen asleep). In that sense Christ was the firstfruits of the larger group of those who believed.
- Resurrection would be a fruitless idea if it did not apply to those who were already dead. This is the last mention of Christ's resurrection in the argument, but all that follows rests on this fact.

Verse 21—Adam was the first man in the old creation, and, like him, all of his sons die physically *for since death came through a man.*

- Christ is the first man in the new creation, and, like Him, all of His sons will live physically *the resurrection of the dead also came through a man.* Both Adam and Jesus were men.

Verse 22—Therefore, our resurrection will be a human resurrection, not some “spiritual” type of resurrection *for just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.*

- Physical resurrection is as inevitable for the sons of Jesus Christ (believers) as physical death is for the sons of Adam (humans).

Verse 23—Christ was first in rank in resurrection and those who follow him are next in rank in resurrection—the full harvest *but each in his own order* (τάγματι an orderly arrangement).

- The answer to the timing of the resurrection is in the **ranking** of resurrections *Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming.*

Application

In Revelation 20:5-6, John referred to *the first resurrection* of all believers of every age, even though their resurrections rank differently.

- Jesus was raised first, who is the first fruits of those who sleep (1 Corinthians 15:23).
- Believers' bodies are raised at the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13f).
- The two witnesses are raised during the Great Tribulation (Revelation 11:3 and 11).
- Tribulation martyrs are raised at the beginning of the Millennium (Revelation 20:4). Old Testament saints are apparently raised at the same time (Isaiah 26:19f; Ezekiel 37:12f; and Daniel 12:2f).
- The first resurrection, then, is the resurrection of all believers, which takes place in stages. John says *this is the first resurrection and blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection* (Revelation 20:6).
- This is in contrast to a second resurrection where God will raise all of the wicked at one time—at the end of the millennium—to be judged at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:12-13).

Verse 24—When Christ comes, *then comes the end*, which referred to the end of the present heavens and earth.

- This will come more than 1,000 years after the Rapture.
- Then Christ, who will have been reigning over His earthly millennial kingdom, will turn over that reign to His Father *when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father.* This final succession takes place *when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power* after He subdues the rebels that rise up against Him at the end of the Millennium (Revelation 20:7-10).

Verse 25—Christ will reign in the Millennium *until He has put all His enemies under His feet.*

- The government will be a theocracy with a monarchy under divine direction.
- The Messiah, Jesus Christ, will be King (Isaiah 2:2-4; 9:3-7; 49:1-7; Zechariah 9:10-15).
- Any open acts against the authority of the King will be punished with physical death (Psalm 72:1-4; Isaiah 29:20-21; and Jeremiah 31:29-30).
- So Jesus' reign on earth will be an entirely just administration for the first time in human history.

Verse 26—He will also defeat death, and from then on no one will die *the last enemy that will be abolished* (καταργεῖται rendered inactive or inoperative) *is death.*

- It is not the human body that will be destroyed, but the destroyer of human bodies, death itself.

Verse 27—Paul saw Jesus Christ as the person who fulfilled the prophecy recorded in Psalm 8:7, *for He has put all things in subjection* (ὑπέταξεν to subordinate or put under) *under His feet.*

- In Psalm 8:7, the ruler in view is man, but Christ will be the Man who regained for humanity all that Adam lost.
- *But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," to Christ, it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him.*
- God the Father Himself will not be under the rule of the Son of God. The Father is the One who will finally bring all things into subjection to Christ.
- So there are different persons with differing roles in the Godhead related to the end of time.
- The Son receives an earthly kingdom given to Him from His Father, who after fulfilling that rule, will in turn have that kingdom merge into the eternal kingdom of God the Father, to whom Christ will eternally submit.

Verse 28—There will come a time when **all** creation is subject to Jesus, *when all things are subjected to Him.*

- The earthly millennial kingdom will end as all things assimilate into God's eternal kingdom. The Son will subject Himself to the Father forever, *then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him.*
- The purpose of this eternal consummation of all things is *so that God may be all in all.* The resurrection set in motion a chain of events that will ultimately culminate in the death of death.
- Then God will resume being what He was before creation, *all in all* with no need for a mediator, as God and His people have direct access to one another forever!

There Are Incentives for Believing in a Resurrection

Verse 29—*Otherwise, if what Paul just said is not true (resurrection of Christ and believers), then what will those do who are baptized for the dead?*

- Many interpretations of this statement have been suggested (<https://www.studylight.org/commentary/1-corinthians/15-29.html>).
- The most likely interpretation is that some Corinthians had undergone baptism by proxy to bear witness to the faith of fellow believers who had died without experiencing that rite themselves.
- Paul neither recommends nor condemns this practice, but only used it as evidence from the lives of the Corinthians themselves to bolster his larger argument, begun in 15:12, that resurrection from the dead is a present reality in Christ and a future reality for them *if the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?*
- Whatever they may have proclaimed, the Corinthians' actions demonstrated that they had hope for a bodily resurrection.

Verse 30—Not only was their incentive for believing in resurrection from the reality of **salvation**, but also from the perspective of **service** for Christ *why are we also in danger every hour?*

- If there is no resurrection, why did Paul endure so many hardships and dangers in his ministry? It would be senseless to put himself in bodily danger every hour if there was no resurrection.

Verse 31—Paul backed up this assertion with a kind of oath. *I affirm, brethren*, asserting a pledge to the Corinthians of his genuineness in believing in resurrection.

- His life and service were a powerful statement about the validity of resurrection.
- He said he faced death daily, *I die daily*, boasting in the very existence of the Corinthians as believers *the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord* which involved its own kind of death dying service for Paul.
- Many times his life was imperiled and at least once he thought he would die (2 Corinthians 1:8-9; 11: 23-28).

Verse 32—One case of facing death occurred in Ephesus, where Paul may have been when he wrote this epistle (Acts 18:1-19).

- *If from human motives* (κατὰ ἄνθρωπον lit., according to man) *I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus.*
- This expression described his conflict to be with very hostile human adversaries, not actually with *wild beasts*.
- Paul asked, *what does it profit me?* if in risking his life if the dead do not rise.
- Paul quoted Isaiah 22:13 to prove his point. *If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die* and just live only for the present moment and ignore eternity.

Verse 33—Another incentive for believing in resurrection was **sanctification**.

- *Do not be deceived* (by the idea that there is no resurrection): *“Bad company corrupts good morals.”*
- Paul used this statement to warn his readers that if they kept company with people who denied the resurrection, their character would eventually suffer. This would only reinforce hedonism—devoting one’s life to pleasure *let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.*
- The deception would be that there is no eternal accountability due to no resurrection.

Verse 34—Instead, the Corinthians needed to do some serious thinking and *become sober-minded as you ought* in order to correct themselves.

- Rather than living for the present, as their pagan neighbors were undoubtedly encouraging them to do, they needed to *stop sinning* and fulfill their present purpose, which was not hedonism!
- It’s as if some in the Corinthian church *have no knowledge of God*.
- The Corinthian church prided itself on its knowledge, but it did not possess a crucial piece of knowledge as to the resurrection.
- *I speak this to your shame* that the false idea of no resurrection caught the imagination of some in the Corinthian church.
- This is the second time Paul shames them, the first for taking each other to court (1 Corinthians 6:5).

Application

These experiential arguments supporting the validity of the resurrection add further weight to the historical (verses 1-11), logical (verses 12-19), and theological (verses 20-28) reasoning.

- These experiences show that believers generally and the apostle particularly believed in the reality of resurrection deeply and seriously. It affected the way they lived, hoped, served and grew spiritually.
- When one has the reality of a resurrection firmly in their grasp, it will sway how life is lived and provide an eternal motivation for a righteous life.

The Nature of the Resurrection Body

Verse 35—An objection to belief in anyone’s resurrection might be its incomprehensibility, *but someone will say, “How are the dead raised?”*

- Specifically, that objection might have to do with the reconstruction of the body out of the same physical elements that it formerly possessed, “*and with what kind of body do they come?*”

Verse 36—Paul did not consider these sorts of questions a wise person would ask. *You fool!*

- Death is necessary to resurrection *that which you sow does not come to life unless it dies.*
- Like a seed sown decomposes when planted in the ground, and then becomes a plant later, we cannot rise until we die.

Verse 37—The body that God resurrects will not be the same type of body that died, even though it is the body of the same person, *and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be.*

- A new form of life springs forth from death similar to *a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else* that sprouts a plant from that seed, directly linked to the seed, but remarkably different from it.

Verse 38—So human life exists in one form of body before death, and after death it exists in a different type of body, *but God gives it a body just as He wished.*

- God does this with grain, *and to each of the seeds a body of its own*, so He can do it with humans, too.
- Since this is such an obvious phenomenon in nature, failing to observe what God did in the seeds of their fields was indeed foolish of the Corinthians.

Verse 39—There is an amazing variety of earthly physical bodies, but not all flesh is of the same kind, *all flesh is not the same flesh.*

- The variety in Creation reflects the will of the Maker of it all.
- The differences in the flesh of animate creation distinguishes them, *but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish*, giving expression to the splendor of our God and Father in heaven.
- The fact that there are different kinds of bodies among animals should help us understand that there can also be different kinds of human bodies.

Verse 40—Likewise, the fact that celestial bodies differ in glory (fitness of role and place) shows that human bodies can also differ in glory, *there are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies.*

- Earthly bodies are not adapted to the heavenly regions nor the celestial heavenly bodies to the condition of earthly beings, *but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another.*

Verse 41—There is a variety of glory (fitness of role and place) among the celestial bodies themselves. *There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.*

- All of this comparison is to indicate that the bodies of the dead, when they rise, will be so far changed that they will be adapted for the heavenly regions.
- This will include varieties of glory (fit for role and place) among the bodies of the dead when they are raised, just as the sun, moon and stars are fit for their role and place in the heavens.

Application

In one sense, resurrected believers will all be fit with a body that is conditioned to their role and place in the eternal kingdom. In another sense, this may suggest differences among glorified believers with differing roles and places in that eternal kingdom. Apparently, it is at the Judgement Seat of Christ where those differences will be determined, based on one’s rewards.

Verse 42—Having argued the difference and newness of the resurrection body, Paul now contrasts the resurrection body with the natural body, *so also is the resurrection of the dead.*

- Our resurrection body will be unique and different from other resurrection bodies.
- We put the human body into the ground (interment) just like a seed *it is sown a perishable body*, but God raises it to incorruption (imperishable) *it is raised an imperishable* (ἀφθαρσία immortality, incorrupt) *body.*

Verse 43—When we put the human body into the ground, it dishonors the body, *it is sown in dishonor*.

- There is nothing noble about death. We put dead bodies out of sight because they rot and decay.
- However, God raises the body to glory and honor *it is raised in glory* and our resurrection bodies will honor the Lord because they will be free from the sin capacity.
- The body is at the point of ultimate weakness when it dies, but it is powerful when it becomes a resurrection body *it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power*.

Verse 44—*It is sown a natural body* (ψυχικόν soulish in the sense of mind, emotion, and will) belonging to the present age; but *it is raised a spiritual body* (πνευματικόν supernatural), belonging to the future age.

- The Corinthian believer's *bodies* would become spiritual, namely, fitted for their future existence.
- Thus *spiritual* here refers to the body's use fitted for that realm, as well as its substance.
- Their physical bodies would be raised to continuing life, but those bodies, while physical, would be of a different type than their present physical bodies, *if there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body*.

An Analogy between Adam and Christ's Body

Verse 45—Scripture agreed with Paul's premise about a physical, bodily resurrection, *so also it is written* that the natural body is physical, the product of Adam who received life from God "*The first man, Adam, became a living soul*" (a partial quote from Genesis 2:7).

- God created Adam with a natural body, not a glorified body. He had a soul as well as a body—alive with material and immaterial components, but it eventually died.
- *The last Adam became a life-giving spirit* (ζωοποιούν to cause to live, make alive), making the resurrection body spiritual, the product of Jesus Christ who gives new life.
- That life will inhabit a body that will never die.
- Paul called it spiritual because it is ready for the spiritual rather than the physical realm.
- Jesus did not receive the breath of life.
- God breathed life into the first Adam but the last Adam gave life.

Verse 46—We have the physical body until resurrection and eternity, not before it begins, *the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual*.

- The natural generations who follow Adam will die twice, once physically and once eternally.
- The generations who follow Christ are spiritual and will die once but not twice.
- If you are born once, you will die twice.
- If you are born twice, you will die once.
- Some Christians will never die even once, since the Lord may come and take them before they die.

Verse 47—God formed Adam out of dust to live on this planet *the first man is from the earth, earthy*.

- Jesus Christ had a heavenly origin *the second man is from heaven*.
- The first man Adam was fitted for life in this age with natural life, whereas the last Adam was fitted for life in the age to come with spiritual life.
- God equipped both to live in the realm that they would occupy.

Verse 48—The bodies we inherit from Adam are for earthly existence, *as is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy*.

- The bodies we will receive from Christ at our resurrection will be for living in the spiritual realm and *as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly*.
- This is a contrast of the spiritual with the earthly.

Verse 49: Those born only of the first Adam, whom God equipped to live in the natural world, likewise exist in that world, *just as we have borne the image of the earthy*.

- Those born also of the last Adam, whom God equipped to live in the supernatural world by resurrection, also will exist in that world, *we will also bear the image of the heavenly*.
- Natural tendencies and predisposition will rule in the natural world with a human body.
- Supernatural tendencies and predispositions will rule in the eternal realm with a heavenly body.

The Resurrection Gives Assurance of Victory over Death

Verse 50—So here is the bottom line to the argument in this chapter of the validity of resurrection.

- *Now I say this, brethren, namely, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.*
- It is impossible for us in our present physical forms to enter into, as an inheritance, the heavenly glories in God's kingdom that Christ is preparing for us.
- Our present bodies in their current condition cannot enter into the kingdom of God.
- The corruptible or perishable (decomposing) body cannot enter a state of incorruption, *nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable*.
- Only the resurrection can put the body into a new state.

Verse 51—*Behold* is a way to grab the reader's attention to announce something significant.

- Paul was about to explain something never before revealed, *I tell you a mystery* (μυστήριον something hidden or a secret).
- Paul had told the Corinthians that the apostles were *servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God* (1 Corinthians 4:1).
- In this case, he revealed that *we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed* (ἀλλαγησόμεθα to be transformed or exchange one thing for another).
- Not all Christians will die and be put into the grave before the Rapture, but every Christian, both dead and living at the coming of Christ, will be changed or transformed in body.
- Christians will instantaneously receive their glorified bodies at the Rapture.

Verse 52—This transformation will not be a gradual process but instantaneous *in a moment* (ριπή ὀφθαλμοῦ a very rapid movement, blinking of the eye), *in the twinkling of an eye* less than a fraction of a second.

- There will be a trumpet call at the Rapture to summon Christians to heaven *at the last trumpet*. It is the last trumpet in the sense that it connects with our destiny, signaling the end of our present existence and the beginning of our future eternal and heavenly life *for the trumpet* (either literal or possibly a metaphor for God's summons) *will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed*.
- Other trumpets will sound announcing various other events in the future (Revelation 8:6ff; 11:15-18).

Verse 53—The dead will rise in bodies that are not subject to corruption, *for this perishable must put on the imperishable*, and the living will receive immortal bodies too, *and this mortal must put on immortality*.

- Not only will Christians not die again, but also they cannot die again. The glorified body will be immortal, that is, not subject to death.

Verse 54—The physical body of a believer one day will put on an eternal body, a glorified body, *but when this perishable will have put on the imperishable*.

- God will transplant our mortal body with an immortal body that will not corrode (not be subject to death) *and this mortal will have put on immortality*.
- Everyone will have life in eternity but not all will have life with God, immortal life.
- Our earthly bodies are fit for this world; the resurrection body will be fit for eternity—in either heaven or the Lake of Fire.
- This transformation will fulfill the prophecy in Isaiah 25:8 *then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory."*
- The immortal life of believers that Paul just revealed harmonized with prophetic Scripture. God will overcome death.

Verse 55—Paul modified for his own purposes Hosea’s defiant challenge for death to do its worst from Hosea 13:14, “*O death, where is your victory?*”

- The grave was a place where corruption occurred. Every corpse is death’s victory.
- Jesus took that victory from death and Hades by His resurrection. “*O death, where is your sting?*”
- God defeats death at the point when the believer receives his glorified body.
- Death is man’s last enemy. God will defeat it when He raises His people to life.

Verse 56—The fatal sting of death touches humans through sin *the sting of death is sin*.

- Sin is deadly, lethal, and fatal; it winds us up in the grave.
- The law makes sin grievous by making God’s standards clearer *and the power of sin is the law*.
- The reason why the Law gave sin power is because the sin the Law exposed justified our condemnation. The Law only condemns and no one can be justified by it. That is how it was useful for God.

Verse 57—However, *but thanks* (χάρις that which affords joy, pleasure and delight) *be to God* for the victory over the condemnation of the law, sin, and death *who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*.

- Christ secured deliverance from condemnation, allowing for the new birth, a new state of being for us, in which we can experience now the victorious life we have been given as believers by Christ.
- We can use the law of God to aggressively love others rather than as a means of condemnation any longer!

Verse 58—Paul concluded with a warm exhortation *therefore, my beloved brethren*, to be faithful in the present moment *be steadfast*. *Steadfast* is being seated and thus settled; it is a fixed purpose of heart against error.

- Additionally, Paul calls the Corinthians to be *immovable* (ἀμετακίνητοι firmly persistent, stability) about the reality and validity of the resurrection. Stay true to this essential doctrine of the Christian faith.
- The reality of the resurrection will motivate believers to do the work of the Kingdom, *always* (at all times) *abounding* (περισσεύοντες abundance or excess) *in the work of the Lord*, which work is the work God has given us to do. That work is never a waste of time or energy *knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord*.
- Confidence in the resurrection moves us to stability and service because an eternal perspective is the means of sustaining our service for the Lord.

Application

Not only should we remain immovable in our service for the Lord, we should increase our efforts to maximize that work of building up the saints, making disciples, teaching God’s Word, exposing error, and pursuing our spiritual maturity. We can do that by living in the present with the eternal future clearly and daily in view. Our future promised and secured resurrection should motivate us to be faithful, knowing that one day we will have to account for the stewardship God has entrusted to us.